

I. Remarks

Claims 1-16 were pending in this application. The present amendment withdraws claims 5-6, and 9, adds new claims 17-20 and amends claims 1-4, 7-8, and 10-16 to more particularly point out and clarify certain aspects of Applicants' invention and to correct minor typographical errors. No new matter has been added by the present amendment. After this amendment, claims 1-4, 7-8, and 10-20 will be pending. Reconsideration of the application in view of the present amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1-2, 4-6, 10-11, and 13-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent Number 6,530,595, issued to Masuda ("Masuda"). Applicant has withdrawn claims 5-6 by this response and therefore, the rejection of claims 5-6 are now moot. The rejection of claims 1-2, 4, 10-11 and 13-16 are traversed.

Applicant has amended independent claim 1 to recite that the gas supply duct is provided with a plurality of apertures that are provided with a reinforcement reinforcing peripheries of the apertures. The reinforcement is formed of an elongated reinforcing element that defines a plurality of openings. The reinforcing element is affixed onto a surface of the gas supply duct about the apertures. The openings of the reinforcing element are aligned with corresponding apertures of the gas supply duct and the reinforcing element does not extend around the gas supply duct. Support for this amendment may be found in paragraph [0043] of the specification and in figure 5.

Applicant has amended claim 13 to be an independent claim which recites that the reinforcement reinforcing peripheries of apertures of the gas supply duct is formed of overlapping portions of the flexible material of the gas supply duct. The overlapping portions are affixed together by adhesive and the overlapping portions do not extend around the gas supply duct.

Support for this amendment may be found in paragraphs [0046], [0047] and figures 7(a)-(c).

In one embodiment, Masuda recites an air-bag having a cylindrical member 60 with a gas exit opening 62 reinforced by using overlapping double thick layers 63(a) and 63(b) which extend around the cylindrical member and are attached to each other by an adhesive 66 placed near the opening 62 which increases the strength near the opening. The double thick layers 63(a) and (b) are sewn together at an upper portion of the cylindrical member 60. (Masuda column 5, lines 46-67 and figures 10a and 10b).

The air-bag disclosed in Masuda is contrary to the present invention. Specifically, Applicants' invention in claim 1 recites that the reinforcing element does not extend around the gas supply duct. Moreover, Applicant's invention in claim 13 recites that the reinforcement is formed of overlapping portions affixed together by adhesive and the overlapping portions do not extend around the gas supply duct. In that Masuda lacks the noted elements of amended claim 1 and amended claim 13, the rejection based thereon should be withdrawn. Accordingly, Applicant believes claims 1 and 13, and their corresponding dependent claims 2, 4, 10-11 and 14-16 are in a condition for allowance.

Claims 1-6, 10 and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent Number 6,073,961 issued to Bailey ("Bailey"). This rejection is traversed. Applicant has withdrawn claims 5-6 by this response and therefore, the rejection of claims 5-6 are now moot. The rejection of claims 1-4, 10, and 12 traversed.

In one embodiment, Bailey recites an air-bag 22 having a tube 70 which includes openings 72 for directing gas. The tube has an elastomeric inner tube 71 with a reinforced outer sheath 73. (See Bailey column 2, lines 26-29 and figures 1(a)-1(c)). Thus a double thick construction with a reinforcing layer 73 which extends completely around the cross-section of the tube 70 is used to reinforce the tube about the openings 72.

The construction disclosed in Bailey is contrary to the present invention. Specifically, Applicants' invention recites that the reinforcing element does not extend around the gas supply duct. In that Bailey lacks this noted element of amended claim 1, the rejection based thereon should be withdrawn. Accordingly, Applicant believes claim 1 and its dependent claims 2-4, 10 and 12 are in condition for allowance.

Rejections under U.S.C. 35 § 103

Claims 7-9 and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Masuda in view of U.S. Patent Number 5,634,659 issued to Abraham ("Abraham"). Applicant has withdrawn claim 9 by this response and therefore, the rejection of claim 9 is now moot. The rejection of claims 7-8 and 12 are traversed.

Applicant has amended claim 7 to recite that the gas supply duct is provided with at least one aperture. Reinforcement is provided which reinforces a periphery of the aperture. The reinforcement is stitching that is provided in the flexible material. This amendment is supported in the specification and there is no new matter.

Abraham recites an inflatable air-bag 10 having an opening 30 for venting fluid from an inflated chamber 20. A woven, oriented reinforcement material 36 is fixedly secured to the air-bag 10 and surrounds the vent opening 30. (See Abraham Abstract). The vent reinforcement 36 is ring-shaped and may be secured to the inside of the air-bag 10 so that the reinforcement surrounds the vent opening 30. Stitches 38 may be used to secure the reinforcement 36 to the air-bag 10. (See column 2, lines 1-5 and figure 3).

As can be seen from above, the vent opening 30 is locally reinforced by a woven, oriented reinforcing material 36 and not the stitching 38. The stitching is used to secure the reinforcement 36 to the air-bag 10 and accordingly, the stitching 38 is sewn in such a fashion that merely secures the reinforcing material 36 to the air-bag 10.

Neither Masuda nor Abraham independently or in combination, disclose, teach or suggest the present invention recited in amended claim 7. More specifically, neither Masuda nor Abraham disclose, teach or suggest a gas supply duct extending into the air-bag and being provided with at least one aperture therein, the said at least aperture being provided with a reinforcement reinforcing a periphery of the aperture, wherein the reinforcement is stitching provided in the flexible material.

Both air-bags disclosed in Masuda and Abraham are contrary to the present invention. Specifically, the air-bag disclosed in Masuda does not use stitching to reinforce an aperture in a gas supply duct within the air-bag. The air-bag disclosed in Abraham does not have a supply duct formed on the inside of the air-bag and the vent hole in the outer portion of the air-bag is not reinforced by stitching. In that both Masuda and Abraham lack the noted element of claim 7, the rejection based thereon should be withdrawn. Accordingly, Applicant believes amended claim 7 and its dependent claim 8 are in a condition for allowance.

Moreover, claim 12 has been amended to include among other things dependency upon amended independent claim 1. As discussed above, the 35 U.S.C. 102(b) rejection of Masuda is improper. Masuda does not teach each and every element of claim 1. Abraham does not teach, disclose or suggest all of these missing elements. Thus, the combination of Masuda and Abraham does not teach, disclose or suggest all of the elements of these claims and the rejection based thereon should also be withdrawn. Accordingly, Applicant believes amended claim 12 is in a condition for allowance.

Claims 17-20 have been added by the present amendment and are dependent claims of amended independent claim 1. All of these elements are supported in the specification and there is no new matter. Moreover, Applicant believes these claims are patentable for the reasons discussed in the foregoing paragraphs as well as for their own specific elements recited therein.

Conclusion

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present form of the claims are patentably distinguishable over the art of record and that this application is now in condition for allowance. Such action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date

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Attachments: